

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of representing control functions in a user application, the user application providing a plurality of control palettes, each control palette representing a set of control data and/or control functions of the user application, the method comprising:

providing a group of control palettes in an application window of the user application, the group of control palettes including two or more of the plurality of control palettes;

receiving a first user input associating the group of control palettes with a first location within a region extending along one or more borders of a user interface; and

generating a first stashed palette group in response to the first user input, the first stashed palette group having an active state and an inactive state,

the active state including an expanded view of the group of control palettes, the expanded view including a representation of at least a portion of the control data and/or control functions of one or more of the group of control palettes, arranged in a floating, non-modal window that covers a portion of the user interface in an area proximate to the first location, and

the inactive state including a collapsed view of the group of control palettes arranged along the border in an area proximate to the first location.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a second user input associating a second group of control palettes with a second location within the region extending along one or more borders of the user interface; and

generating a second stashed palette group in response to the second user input, the second stashed palette group having an active state and an inactive state,

the active state including an expanded view of the second group of control palettes, the expanded view including a representation of at least a portion of the control data and/or control functions of one or more of the second group of control palettes, arranged in a floating, non-modal window that covers a portion of the user interface in an area proximate to the second location, and

the inactive state including a collapsed view of the second group of control palettes arranged along the border in an area of proximate to the second location.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a third user input associating the first stashed palette group with a third location within the region extending along one or more borders of the user interface; and  
representing the first stashed palette group in an area of the user interface proximate to the third location.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein:

the region extends along one or more of a right border, a left border, a top border, and a bottom border of the user interface.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein:

the user interface is a display screen of a computer monitor or an application window presented on a display screen of a computer monitor.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein:

each of the first group of control palettes has a control tab and a control area, the control area including a representation of the control data and/or control functions of the respective control palette;

the expanded view includes a representation of at least a portion of the control area of one or more of the first group of control palettes; and

the collapsed view includes a representation of an arrangement of the control tabs of the first group of control palettes along the border in the area proximate to the first location.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein:

the first stashed palette group includes a stashed palette group control, the stashed palette group control being selectable to activate a control element representing one or more selectable functions associated the first stashed palette group.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein:  
the size of the area occupied by the first stashed palette group is configurable by a user of the user application.
9. The method of claim 2, further comprising:  
receiving a fourth user input associating a control palette in the first group of control palettes with the second stashed palette group; and  
moving the associated control palette to the second stashed palette group in response to the fourth user input.
10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
receiving a fifth user input associating a control palette in the first group of control palettes with a location outside of the first stashed palette group; and  
in response to the fifth user input, displaying a representation of the control palette at the location outside of the first stashed palette group, and removing the control palette from the first stashed palette group.
11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
receiving a sixth user input disassociating all of the control palettes of the first group of control palettes with the first stashed palette group; and  
in response to the sixth user input, eliminating the first stashed palette group.
12. The method of claim 2, further comprising:  
simultaneously representing the first stashed palette group in the active state in the area proximate to the first location and the second stashed palette group in the inactive state in the area proximate to the second location.
13. A method of representing control functions in a user application, the user application providing a plurality of control palettes, each control palette representing a set of control data and/or control functions of the user application, the method comprising:

providing a stashed palette group including two or more of the plurality of control palettes of the user application, the stashed palette group being associated with a location in a region extending along one or more borders of a user interface;

determining whether the stashed palette group is in an active state or an inactive state;

if the stashed palette group is in the active state, displaying an expanded view of the stashed palette group at the location, the expanded view including a representation of at least a portion of the control data and/or control functions of one or more of control palettes in the stashed palette group, arranged in a floating, non-modal window that covers a portion of the user interface in an area proximate to the location; and

if the stashed palette group is in the inactive state, displaying a collapsed view of the stashed palette group arranged along the border at the location.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising:

providing a second stashed palette group including two or more of the plurality of control palettes of the user application, the second stashed palette group being associated with a second location in the region extending along one or more borders of the user interface;

determining whether the second stashed palette group is in an active state or an inactive state;

if the second stashed palette group is in the active state, displaying an expanded view of the second stashed palette group at the second location, the expanded view including a representation of at least a portion of the control data and/or control functions of one or more of control palettes in the second stashed palette group, arranged in a floating, non-modal window that covers a portion of the user interface in an area proximate to the second location; and

if the second stashed palette group is in the inactive state, displaying a collapsed view of the second stashed palette group arranged along the border at the second location.

15. A computer program product, tangibly embodied in an information carrier, for representing control functions in a user application, the user application providing a plurality of control palettes, each control palette representing a set of control data and/or control

functions of the user application, the product including instructions operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:

- providing a group of control palettes in an application window of the user application, the group of control palettes including two or more of the plurality of control palettes;

- receiving a first user input associating the group of control palettes with a first location within a region extending along one or more borders of a user interface; and

- generating a first stashed palette group in response to the first user input, the first stashed palette group having an active state and an inactive state,

  - the active state including an expanded view of the group of control palettes, the

    - expanded view including a representation of at least a portion of the control data and/or control functions of one or more of the group of control palettes, arranged in a floating, non-modal window that covers a portion of the user interface in an area proximate to the first location, and

  - the inactive state including a collapsed view of the group of control palettes arranged along the border in an area proximate to the first location.

16. The computer program product of claim 15, further comprising instructions operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:

- receiving a second user input associating a second group of control palettes with a second location within the region extending along one or more borders of the user interface; and

- generating a second stashed palette group in response to the second user input, the second stashed palette group having an active state and an inactive state,

  - the active state including an expanded view of the second group of control

    - palettes, the expanded view including a representation of at least a portion of the control data and/or control functions of one or more of the second group of control palettes, arranged in a floating, non-modal window that covers a portion of the user interface in an area proximate to the second location, and

  - the inactive state including a collapsed view of the second group of control palettes arranged along the border in an area proximate to the second location.

17. The computer program product of claim 15, further comprising instructions operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:

receiving a third user input associating the first stashed palette group with a third location within the region extending along one or more borders of the user interface; and  
representing the first stashed palette group in an area of the user interface proximate to the third location.

18. The computer program product of claim 15, wherein:

the region extends along one or more of a right border, a left border, a top border, and a bottom border of the user interface.

19. The computer program product method of claim 15, wherein:

the user interface is a display screen of a computer monitor or an application window presented on a display screen of a computer monitor.

20. The computer program product of claim 15, wherein:

each of the first group of control palettes has a control tab and a control area, the control area including a representation of the control data and/or control functions of the respective control palette;

the expanded view includes a representation of at least a portion of the control area of one or more of the first group of control palettes; and

the collapsed view includes a representation of an arrangement of the control tabs of the first group of control palettes along the border in the area proximate to the first location.

21. The computer program product of claim 15, wherein:

the first stashed palette group includes a stashed palette group control, the stashed palette group control being selectable to activate a control element representing one or more selectable functions associated the first stashed palette group.

22. The computer program product of claim 15, wherein:

the size of the area occupied by the first stashed palette group is configurable by a user of the user application.

23. The computer program product of claim 16, further comprising instructions operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:

receiving a fourth user input associating a control palette in the first group of control palettes with the second stashed palette group; and

moving the associated control palette to the second stashed palette group in response to the fourth user input.

24. The computer program product of claim 15, further comprising instructions operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:

receiving a fifth user input associating a control palette in the first group of control palettes with a location outside of the first stashed palette group; and

in response to the fifth user input, displaying a representation of the control palette at the location outside of the first stashed palette group, and removing the control palette from the first stashed palette group.

25. The computer program product of claim 15, further comprising instructions operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:

receiving a sixth user input disassociating all of the control palettes of the first group of control palettes with the first stashed palette group; and

in response to the sixth user input, eliminating the first stashed palette group.

26. The computer program product of claim 16, further comprising instructions operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:

simultaneously representing the first stashed palette group in the active state in the area proximate to the first location and the second stashed palette group in the inactive state in the area proximate to the second location.

27. A computer program product, tangibly embodied in an information carrier, for representing control functions in a user application, the user application providing a plurality of control palettes, each control palette representing a set of control data and/or control functions of the user application, the product including instructions operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:

- providing a stashed palette group including two or more of the plurality of control palettes of the user application, the stashed palette group being associated with a location in a region extending along one or more borders of a user interface;

- determining whether the stashed palette group is in an active state or an inactive state;

- if the stashed palette group is in the active state, displaying an expanded view of the stashed palette group at the location, the expanded view including a representation of at least a portion of the control data and/or control functions of one or more of control palettes in the stashed palette group, arranged in a floating, non-modal window that covers a portion of the user interface in an area proximate to the location; and

- if the stashed palette group is in the inactive state, displaying a collapsed view of the stashed palette group arranged along the border at the location.

28. The computer program product of claim 27, further comprising instructions operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:

- providing a second stashed palette group including two or more of the plurality of control palettes of the user application, the second stashed palette group being associated with a second location in the region extending along one or more borders of the user interface;

- determining whether the second stashed palette group is in an active state or an inactive state;

- if the second stashed palette group is in the active state, displaying an expanded view of the second stashed palette group at the second location, the expanded view including a representation of at least a portion of the control data and/or control functions of one or more of control palettes in the second stashed palette group, arranged in a floating, non-modal window that covers a portion of the user interface in an area proximate to the second location; and



if the second stashed palette group is in the inactive state, displaying a collapsed view of the second stashed palette group arranged along the border at the second location.